1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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Matkom (Hindi: *Mahua*; *Bassia latifolia*) which are collected and distributed as part of the ceremony.**

The manifest purpose of the *Baha* ceremony is to request the deities (*boṅga*) to prevent the occurrence of disease, a request which is made at every Santal ceremony and to provide good crops. The rites performed seem to express a general concern for the bounty of nature, respect for the village founder and his descendants, e.g., the headman and priest, and a reaffirmation of the ties of kinship, including an obligatory expression of joking behavior between "joking relatives" (*gonok' hoṛ*). The respect shown for the village founder and his descendants may, of course, be regarded as reflecting and reinforcing village solidarity.

The festival as practiced in the village lasts two days. On the first day the priest (*Naeke*) bathes to purify himself and immerses for ritual purity the implements to be used in the rites. Most of the men gather at his house and five among them become "possessed" (*rum*). Each is possessed by one of the five major deities worshipped during *Baha*. One speaks and acts as Jaherera, the Goddess of the Sacred Grove; one as *Mõṛeko*, the Five; one as *Liṭa*; one as *Marañ Buru*, Great Mountain; one as *Goram Boṅga*, Old Deity, who is the spirit of Mañjhi Haṛam, the village founder. In the possessed state the five mediums go to the Sacred Grove to see that acts of purification previously performed there by the priest, including washing the three stones representing the deities of the grove and plastering the ground with purifying cow dung, have been properly performed.

On the next day the priest, accompanied by the same five

** The former is used for wood in building and for fuel and the leaves for making plates; the latter is the source of an intoxicating drink known as *Parua*.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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369 There are a few observations concerning ceremonial practice
796 which apply to all the city Santal (excluding, of course, those
[622] who live in town *bustees*). We have seen that the city Santal
778 are not even a community to the degree that the *bustee* Santal
[793] are; they do not, for the most part, live side-by-side, they have no headman or priest and they have no Sacred Grove in which to assemble for community worship. The practice of community worship is ruled out for lack of physical facilities, but as we have seen from our examination of the *bustee*, there is little reason to think that their presence would be sufficient to maintain ceremonial practice and participation at the level obtained in rural villages.

342 What is most striking about the city Santal is that they do
369 not practice ancestor worship in their Company houses. Their
769 explanation of this, with a little elaboration, appears to me to be an adequate one. They say, "Who knows whose houses these were before we got here—they are not our houses. That
[192] is why we do not worship here." It will be recalled that ancestor worship is performed behind a wall dividing off a portion of the main room of the house and known as "inside" (*bhitar*; Santali and Hindi = "inside"). The same word is used to refer to secret rites and deities of a family and of a local lineage, i.e., when a question touches on such things they will say you are asking an "inside" question. It will also be recalled that this "inside" portion of the house must be guarded against pollution by menstruating women. Since it is not permissible to erect such a wall within a company house, again physical facilities in the city render traditional practice difficult. But more than the particular difficulty of lack of a wall, there is a
[783] general question of pollution. Not only does the company house not provide a proper sanctuary for the "inside" rites of

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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the local lineage, but it is filled with the pollution of some unknown *Diku* caste.

Another obstacle to worship that the city Santal encounter is
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that it is illegal to brew rice beer in the city. This restriction is also cited by the city Santal as a reason why they do not practice ancestor worship. On several occasions the police have interfered with its manufacture in town *bustees*.

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Were the city Santal able to live side by side in a single section of the city and to build their own houses, they might at least attain the solidarity of the *bustee* communities. But the policy of alloting houses follows the universalistic principles which TISCO has deliberately fostered. Houses are assigned according to rank in the factory hierarchy and seniority, with personal preference a minor consideration. Thus, the Santal and other ethnic groups are generally dispersed. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that most of those Santal who have chosen to live in Company houses are relatively well educated and highly acculturated; nor is it surprising that the lack of a Santal community in the city is contributing markedly to the Hinduization of the Santal children living there.

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Migration to industrial employment has acted as a sociocultural solvent significantly affecting marriage and ceremonial patterns. Weber's notion of its importance is borne out, but in the cases examined it does not appear to be "the mere fact of living in quite different surroundings" which accounts for its significance. Here its effect seems largely due to its tendency to disrupt traditional social bonds. In the absence of such disruption, as in the case of the natives of Daredih, it seems that traditional practices evolved in a context far removed from urban-industrial conditions are surprisingly viable. These findings support Nash's contentions about the importance of mi-

2; Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

II. CHAṬIAR, CEREMONIAL CLEANSING

a. Janam chaṭiar, ceremonial cleansing after birth[1].

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Children are named after (i. e. born into) the sept of their father, not after that of their mother. When a child is born in a village, this village becomes ceremonially unclean; therefore they do not perform any bonga-worship until the uncleanness has been blotted out. And where a child is born, this house becomes unclean; therefore until the uncleanness is wiped out, no inhabitant of the village will eat or drink in this house.

When a boy is born, they shave on the fifth day, and if it is a girl on the third day. On the day of shaving the father of the child calls on all, (also) poor people, to be shaved. They come together at his house; when all are come they set a barber to do the shaving. First of all he shaves the village priest, thereupon the field priest, thereupon the village headman, the deputy headman, the headman of morals and his deputy and the messenger of the village headman, and thereupon all the men of the village and last of all the father of the child.

Now the barber calls for the new-born child. The woman who has worked as midwife carries the child in her arms out to the door, bringing along two leaf-cups, one leaf-cup with water and one to put the hair in. The barber shaves the child[2]; when this is done, the midwife puts this hair in the leaf-cup; thereupon she binds two threads on the arrow with which she cut the umbilical cord when the child was born. Now the child's father fills oil in the leaf-cup and calls on the men of the village to come along with him to a place where they can go down to the water. They go along. When they come back after having bathed, the midwife takes along with her oil and turmeric and the arrow on which the two threads are bound, and calling on the women of the village to come along she takes them to the watering-place to bathe. They go there. At the place of bathing the midwife throws one thread together with the child's hair into the water and lets it float away, after she has made five marks of sindur at the descent to the water. This they call to buy way down to water. The other thread and the arrow she washes and brings with her back to the house, when all of them have bathed. Arrived to the house the midwife immerses the remaining thread in turmeric(water), and this she makes into

[1] The word is possibly to be connected with H. *chaṭhī*, the sixth (day after birth, when the house is cleaned, the child named, and so on). [2] The whole head.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

585 the leaf-cup with his hand and in his turn smears some on his mother-in-law's two cheeks. After this the bride's mother does the same to the bride and the best-man and the two followers, and they also in their turn do the same to her. The two wives of the brothers of the bride's father also act in the same way.

[783] Thereupon two of those who performed the waving ceremony go into the house, and one of them takes some glowing embers out in an earthenware lid, and the other one takes a wooden pestle and brings it out to the street outside. They place the lid with the glowing embers before the bride and the bridegroom. The bride's mother then takes the pestle in her right hand and waves it over the lid with the glowing embers, and with her left hand she salutes the glowing embers; thereupon she takes the pestle in her left hand and waves it ceremoniously, and with her right hand she salutes the glowing embers; again she takes the pestle back in her right hand and waves it ceremoniously and salutes the glowing embers with her left hand. Then they give the pestle to her two sisters-in-law. They also both act in the same way, one after the other. Having acted in this way the last one stabs the glowing embers in the earthenware lid to pieces with the pestle and then carries the pestle quickly inside. All this they call "purifying"[34].

Thereupon she who tied the bride and the bridegroom together brings water in a loṭa and washes their feet, and, taking hold of the bride with her left hand, she leads the two into the house; what is left of the water in the loṭa that she has in her right hand, she pours it out, as she goes along, and the best-man and his party follow after the two. When they reach the door, the bride's younger sister blocks the way for them, and if she is unable to do it otherwise, she shuts the door. This they call the "shut door". The bridegroom gives her one anna; then she opens the way for them.

Inside the house they spread mats for them, and bride and bridegroom and their followers sit down on these. Now the anointing girls come and anoint them with oil and turmeric; when they have done this, they wash their hands. Thereupon they give them food. The bride's younger brother forcibly takes the rice from the bridegroom; he gives him one mouthful into his mouth; thereupon they eat together from the same plate. When they have eaten, they again wash them. Thereupon the conductress of ceremonies (they also call her Mrs. Best-man) who tied bride and bridegroom together, unties their clothes that were bound together. Thereupon the bridegroom and the best-man and the young follower go out and into the cowshed.

[607] After this the bride's father takes his co-parent-in-law and the marriage-broker and the Jog Mājhi into the house to drink rice-gruel. The bridegroom's father has, as you know, been fasting since he came away from home. They give them beer and food. They now go out and into the cowshed. The bridegroom's party are staying in the village street outside the house.

[34] See Dictionary s. v. parohan.

2; Skrefarud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

used leaves, a burnt log of wood and a worn-out broom have been tied. The people of the village will remain included in the pollution, until they give what is needed for propitiation. They worry the miscreant very much. They do not give him fire, nor do they let the people of this house draw water at the common water-fetching place. Great hardship. 684 692 696

If the village headman meets them with a loṭa with water before the people of the country enter the village street, they do not sing the songs; but in any case they perform the outcasting.

9. Taking into society again.

Outcasted people, who can be taken into society again, do their utmost to provide what is necessary, that they may become members of society again. When they have made the necessary provisions, they inform the village headman, who tells the Pargana. The Pargana informs the Parganas of twelve countries. On the fixed day they assemble in the village. Outside they call a halt. The outcasted people have killed pigs and goats and make a big feast. All is ready. 684 783

Thereupon the outcasted man, having a loṭa with water in his hand, goes to the end of the village street. There he stands with a piece of cloth round his neck, keeping the loṭa with water on the palms of both his hands turned upwards and making supplication, and he looks very miserable and humble. The venerable old Pargana then says to the Parganas of the country and to the collected village headmen: Come along, let us console his soul; he looks very much in need of mercy. He thereupon leads them to the outcasted man. When they reach him, the outcasted man makes his worship to the Day spirit (Siṅ boṅga) and says to them: O Father, I have sinned awfully, I acknowledge my fault, have mercy on me. Then the venerable old Pargana (formerly this was the right of the Murmu people) receives the loṭa with water from the hands of the outcasted man, and worshipping the Day spirit he says to the outcasted man: Because you have acknowledged your sin, we have taken over and taken on us all this (sin) of yours. Having rinsed his mouth with a little water he gives the loṭa to the others, to one after the other. All the leading men rinse their mouths with water from the loṭa.

Thereupon they enter the village. There the man washes the feet of all the leading men, in his courtyard. When he has done this, they sit down in rows beside each other to eat. The man thereupon pours rice out on the leaf-plates to them, one after the other. He sprinkles water on them; he gives them curry, and he puts down on their leaf-plates, for each of the Parganas five rupees, and for each of the village headmen one rupee, and for the headman of his own village he puts down five rupees.

Now they eat, and when they have done this, the venerable Pargana says to the people of the country: From to-day we have taken this man in among us as one of ourselves;

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

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783 uncleanness and defilement all has been cleared away. Consequently from to-day we shall drink a cup of water of his, we shall also smoke a hookah-bowl of his, we shall also give him a daughter of ours in marriage, his daughters we shall also take; like water in a hollowed-out pit in the river, like water in a pool, we have made all clear and pure. Any one who from to-day mentions this matter anywhere or speaks depreciatingly, him we shall make pay one hundred rupees and make him give one hundred leaf-plates (of cooked rice) as a social punishment. Thereupon they dig a pit, bury balls of cow-dung there and press a stone down on it. Now they salute each other and separate.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Santal food. "A Santal will manage to live where even a rat would starve," said a Missionary to Man more than seventy[1] years ago ; and wandering in the Santal lands we heard comments, "O, they will eat anything that flies except aeroplanes and anything that swims except boats." 262

They eat almost all the available kinds of fish and crabs and have a great relish for meat, which they preserve in a way of their own. We saw at the house of Sham Mārṇḍi, a village Chowkidar, that a pig sacrificed during the June sowing festival was being cut to pieces, and learnt that these would be dried in the sun for three days after being mixed with salt. At the time of cooking, these pieces, soaked in water and mixed with salt and turmeric, would be placed on ovens in earthen pots. The Santal would fry the whole with "mohua" oil if available, and thereafter mix it with water and boil it for half an hour, chillies broken to pieces being added to improve the taste. Fowl is a luxury to be eaten on festive occasions and when a guest arrives in the house. It is cooked in a similar process. With an embarrassed look the Santals confessed that they eat carrion, but added that they cook it in an outer house, which implied that under the influence of Hindus they have come to look upon it as a pollution. 251 262 252 262 262 [177] [183]

1 Ref. Man, *Sonthalia and the Sonthals.*

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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562 293 not get drunk." Only if we had not seen women babbling in drunken brawl with the introduction of the outstill system in the Santal Parganas, and had not educated Santals at Baripada told us an opposite tale, . . we could thoroughly agree with her sex-patriotism, if such a phrase is permissible.

562 342 784 [783] [462] In house-construction, however, the division of labour has a nicety of its own, for, we learn, the women cannot sit upon a thatch except on pain of social excommunication. Such a pollution can only be expatiated by *Pujas* to the god "Dhòròm." So by its very necessity, house-building is man's preserve. A quite similar taboo attaches to them during funerals when according to custom, women cannot accompany the procession beyond the limits of the village where the death occurred.

464 625 15.9 Santal men engaged in the police service were highly spoken of by the Superintendent of Police, Mayurbhanj, as efficient, obedient and hard-working. Asked if their drink-habit was not a hindrance to them, he was emphatic that it did not matter at all. Mr. Mahanty, a Deputy Magistrate, spoke in a similar strain about his Santal employees.

562 461 And we have seen women at work, at work during the heat-wave of the Santal Parganas when all nature flies indoors, women singing at their work, punctual to a fault and hard-working to a painful extent. But, if her hour of work is seven a.m.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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4. *Hèmbròm*

614 The patronymic of the Hèmbróm clan of the Santals is "Kunàr" or "Hèmbròm Kunàr." An educated Santal explained to us that this clan belonged to the clerical class, but such a job presupposes a written language of which the Santals have none and in the absence of further light, such a clan seems to be doubtful. Rev. Bodding opines that the word "Kunàr" signifies the nobility.

We came across the following sub-clans of the Hèmbròms in Mayurbhanj or had information about them from well-informed Santals.

(i) Nij Hèmbròm.

(ii) Sole Hèmbròm:—"Sole" was explained to be a kind of fish equivalent to the "shoul mach" (a fish) of Bengal.[1] If these Hèmbròms eat "Sole" [183] fish, they have to undergo ceremonial purification. 614 Here, we ought to mention that the Mayurbhanj 114 Census Report[2] mentions the twelfth Santal clan as "Salay." We made extensive enquiries about this, what appeared to us, a new clan and had a little conference with some educated and leading Santals, but we came to the conclusion that this new clan

1. Ref. Dr. Campbell's Santali to English Dictionary, p. 628 where *Sòlè teàk'* is explained as "a large species of Shrimp."

2. Ref. p. 192 *Census Report*, 1931, Mayurbhanj.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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614 Thus theoretically speaking at least, each of its group is exogamous as far as its own group is concerned, but endogamous in relation to the other groups, who are *Bòndhus*, subject to a variety of other restrictions, as we shall soon see in detail. [174] Broadly speaking, this arrangement points to the existence of a dual division among the Santals in the past for matrimonial purposes.

It may be noted here that the various Santal clans have their own *gadi* (original seats). If it so chances that a Santal finds his own *gadi*, the same with that of others, his attraction is stronger towards his clan-group than to his other relatives, however near they may be. Thus there is a solid tie among the [783] *Jàtià Peras* (friends of the same blood) belonging [764] to the same clan, all of whose members undergo ceremonial pollution on the death of one of the [571] clan. Thus clan-ties amongst Santals transcend even degrees of relationship.

[428] The son inherits the clan-name of his father [69] and lives with his father as of right. The father [611] is the natural guardian of the children, and the way in which descent is reckoned is patrilineal. The [562] Santal wife has no legal status in the eye of tribal urisprudence; she is simply bought and belongs to the husband's family as a chattel. And the type [594] of family that centres round the father as the head, may be characterised as patripotestal.

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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arises ; and those days are no more when it was a regular feature of Santal life with the mass dancing and drinking associated with its conclusion. So it is that the Santals of Mayurbhanj have got a second string to their bow, in the form of a parliament during *Sakrat baske*, (*Mòkòrbasi*, on the second of Magh) in case the hunting assembly may not be convened for want of sufficient attraction.

Supreme council at Mòkòrbasi

This parliament of the *Desh-Pròdhans* is held at some halting place (*gadi* or *mukam*) towards the river Damodar to which the Santals journey to throw the bones of their dead relations in the holy river. Here it is that the people aggrieved by the decision of the *Desh-Pròdhans* appeal to the assembly of elders to reopen their cases and try them according to law. Frequently, these appeals are admitted and tried by the assembly of all the *Desh-Pròdhans* of the tribe in consultation with the elders. But here also only important questions relating to the payment of bride-price or restriction of conjugal rights form the subject-matter of the decisions of the supreme court.

Social taboos: Punishment for their breaches

While dealing with the village assembly and its powers and functions, we have observed that as

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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688 783 regards the breach of social taboos, there are various methods of ceremonial purification. Thus the woman who gets upon a thatch must undergo penance by passing under it, while a mixture of cow-dung in water is poured above the thatch.

If they take rice from *Haḍis*, Weavers, *Ghasis*, *Doms* and such lower caste Hindus, they have to undergo a penance, being summoned by the village Headman and the "Mòṇṛèn hòṛ".

[305] The *modus operandi* of the purification requires the offender to go to *jòl-ghàt* (bathing ghat) where a Santal barber shaves him on receipt of Re 1-4 ans., as his fee, together with a piece of cloth and a bowl. Next, he is taken to the water and forced to take a ceremonial ablution. The village elders now sink [824] a twig of a Pipal (Santali, *Hesak'*, a species of fig, *Ficus Religiosa*, Willd) tree on the mud near the bank ; the barber takes the offender out of the water, while the elders shout *haribol* thrice. Thereafter, water made holy with the touch of *tulsi* leaves, is sprinkled over the delinquent ; and he is tied by the hand to the *Pipal* branch sevenfold by means of a string, amidst a second shout of *haribol*. Now they extricate him out of the knots and give him a brass-coin, a leaf of a *tulsi* plant and some cow-dung to eat, and later take him to the end of the village where the gods *Jahèr era*, Mòṇṛenko, *Atupat* and *Pirpat* are ceremonially worshipped.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,6 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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The offender also offers *pujas* to his own god by sacrificing a fowl. Finally, he is taken back to his tribal fold after entertaining the Headman and the village elders at a feast.

Santal tribal customs prescribe various measures of such purification, and considering their magnitude, they deserve separate treatment in another publication. They have even penances for a man attacked with leprosy. Our scope forbids us to enter into the plethora of these tribal taboos. But we should deal in detail with the tribal purification known as *Bitlahà* that follows a marriage or union within the clan or with non-Santals.

"*Bitlahà*" *in the Santal Parganas*[1]

In recent times, a very curious form of social ostracism named *Bitlahà* prevailing among the Santals of Santal Parganas came to public notice with some of its disturbing repercussions on public peace and tranquillity. This is a tribal purification of those who break the Santal marriage-laws, and a discussion on its nature and significance may prove interesting.

1. This is quoted from the author's article on "*Bitlaha*" or "Santal Social Ostracism," published in the Mayurbhanj Chronicle.

3t Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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So to preserve the decorum of the village during *Bitlabà*, custom lays it down that if the Headman of a village which is to be publicly disgraced thus, receives the mass of Santals with a pot of water as a token of penance, they will desist from singing the obscene songs and will carry out the rest of the programme.

What is dangerous for the State is that during a *Bitlabà*, mass tribal movements are seen throughout the Santal Parganas. Sometimes the infuriated mobs commit excesses of various kinds and many such cases roll into the courts. Again, there are times when the Santal takes it into his head to commit *Bitlabà* on non-Santals. Now, speaking in terms of Santal customary law, non-Santals are beyond their pale, but who can stop the Santal when his passion has been roused? He does not listen to arguments and several years ago the authorities had to quell a disturbance at the Godda subdivision of the Santal Parganas, where tens of thousands of Santals had assembled to lead a *Bitlabà* against some offending non-Santal residents. Our picture of a tribal ferment during a contemplated social ostracism is not at all an exaggerated one. It created so great a flutter that Santals from Monghyr, Bhagalpur and even Rajmahal marched on to join the movement at Godda.

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At Mayurbhanj

684 184 [579] Our enquiries at Mayurbhanj revealed the existence of this institution, the only difference being that no general unrest was reported within recent memory attending the execution of the tribal punishment, so as to endanger the peace of the land. 692 623 634 684 Here also the parties adduce evidence before the *Panchayet*, and more serious cases are referred to the inter-village council and thence, if necessary, to the Supreme Court during the tribal hunt or the parliament at *Mòkòrbasi*.

684 783 [346] The special feature of the Mayurbhanj programme includes installation of a *càṇḍàl* (a temple-like structure made of *Sal* wood) in which straw or mud images of the delinquents are placed, whereas their clothes are hung outside. Then amidst music and beat of drums the ceremony of penance is performed.

Restoration to the Tribal fold

The men who are thus excommunicated are prohibited from any social intercourse with the others as dining and getting their children married. Thus harassed by the villagers, the boycotted persons sometimes leave the village to save themselves and their progeny from ignominy. The position of those who were outcasted for having sexual connexion with people of other races is the worst, for they are

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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not taken back to the tribal fold even on undergoing a ceremony of expiation.

The *modus operandi* of the restoration to the tribe can be thus described:—

The outcaste, as the most essential preliminary, first corrects himself thoroughly and then gives up what the society objected to. Next, he provides for the necessary fines and incidental costs of the ceremony of purification. Thus equipped, he informs the village elders; and on a fixed date the tribe assembles at the cross-road of the village. The offender looks very repentant, folds his hands in a mood of supplication. He bathes and carries water in a pitcher with five holes. Thereafter, a propitiatory ceremony is performed in honour of *Dhòròm (Siñ Boṅga)* and *Maraṅ Burn* who are invoked by an *Obòr Murmu*. An uncastrated goat is offered to the deity. The offending man and woman pay a fine of Re. 1·4 ans. each and the sum is divided amongst the village elders. The cloths of the outcasted man and woman are then taken round the *hat* (market) to the *lòl-ghat* (bathing place) by some, and for this they are paid a annas each as fine by the guilty couple. Now, the people assembled rinse their mouths with water from the pitcher and drink *hàṇḍia* (rice-beer). The pitcher and cloths are then thrown into water amidst cries of *haribol* by the tribe.

[782]

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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684 All this time a tribal feast is in preparation at the cost of the offender at his house. The tribe assembles there. The outcaste washes the feet of the village elders, and thereafter serves the food personally to the tribe assembled. After the feast, the "Mòṇṛèn hòṛ" (the village elders) address the couple saying, "Henceforth you are parted. But should you unite again, you will be fined Rs. 25 each and driven out of the country." They then dig a hole and bury cowdung there or they may simply deposit some cow-dung on the place of the feast. In conclusion, the village-priest offers three fowls to the gods *Jahèr era*, "Mòntènko" and *Maraṅ Buru* so that they may purify the village from the sin committed by the guilty couple, now formally divorced.

[782] [793] [783]

Conclusion

181 619 783 784 The tribal psychology behind these proceedings is not very difficult to be understood. The Santals, like other *Muṇḍà* tribes, consider their tribal solidarity and strength to be their first concern. In the preservation of this tribal entity from conscious or unconscious pollution, they are fired by a primitive fanaticism and they take all measures whereby, they think, they can purify the tribe as a whole, as intrigues beyond the permitted degrees and unions with foreigners serve as the medium of supernatural

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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dangers visiting the tribe. In the background of their minds, they are not imbued by any moral feelings or any sense of tribal aristocracy. Some think that in case of such transgression, the gods in their ire will send drought and famine and pestilence in the place thus visited by sin as it is an insult to them. But when one analyses the behaviour of the Santal masses, when they receive news of prohibited sexual congress and the collective indignation they give vent to as a reaction, one is led to believe that the Santal's almost "instinctive fear of such defilement has behind it also the sub-conscious and, to all appearances, instinctive fear of a mysterious dangerous power of the nature of *mana* infecting the erring woman and her family and calculated to prove contaminating and destructive as death."[1]

Santal Customary Law

We have seen in the foregoing pages that the village-council is the repository of Santal tribal law concerning succession and inheritance. It is therefore necessary for us to give the reader some idea of the law on the subject.

Generally speaking, all the sons of a Santal have equal shares of inheritance in the properties left by their deceased father. The daughter has no right

1. The Kharias. Page 177. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy.

[113]

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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wing of the house serves the purpose. A midwife, a Santal woman of the profession, attends on the parturient woman with her elderly women-relatives. In cases of difficult delivery, *Ojha*s (exorcists) are summoned to perform rites so as to expel the ghosts, supposed to be creating difficulties.

When the child is born, the umbilical cord is severed by the midwife with a sharp iron weapon such as an arrow-blade. The baby is now bathed in tepid water and the navel-string buried near the main door of the room of its birth.

As regards ceremonial uncleanliness for the baby and its mother, the practice differs in different areas of Mayurbhanj. Some do not observe any segregation whatsoever; while others observe it for varying periods[1] from one to twenty-one days, during which they may not visit the room, touch the baby or its mother. The observance of this birth-pollution in some areas and its negation in others, throws a flood of light on the influence of others on their customs and manners. During her confinement, the mother is allowed to eat warm rice with salt, leaves of

1. On this point, Nabin Mañjhi, an old Santal said that custom requires that twelve days should be observed. But it has slackened and men now sometimes consider themselves ceremonially clean, immediately after a child-birth in the house.

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843 *Murài arak'* (an edible leaf, the radish, *Raphanus sativus*, Linn.), and garlic. The members of the family have no particular food-prohibition during this period.

844 783 184 In the Santal Parganas, the house and village become religiously unclean. No festivals or sacrifices are held in the village nor anybody dines in the house of child-birth till after purification, three or five days after, by the *chàṭiar* ceremony.

Narta (Name-giving Ceremony)

553 184 The usual Santal custom is to observe the name-giving ceremony between the third and fifth day after birth. But in Mayurbhanj, some observe it within one year, the date being fixed by the head of the family; while there are others, who may delay it up to the tenth year.

553 574 431 On the date of the ceremony being announced, friends and relatives of the family are invited. They arrive on the day fixed, with presents of rice, cloth, *hàṇḍia* (rice-beer), necklaces of beads (*mala*) and *doṛa* (string worn round the waist, pronounced *dara* by Mayurbhanj Santals) for the new-born child. Now the midwife, who delivered the child, sits with the baby facing east, and with a leaf-cup in front, containing turmeric paste, *mohua* oil and water.

553 982 887 An old man of the village offers the rice-beer presented by others and mixed with the family

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stock, to the chief presiding deity, *Marañ Buru*, and ancestor-spirits of the family, uttering suitable incantations so that the baby may prosper in life and have no diseases.

The child, if a male one, now receives his name after his grand-father; and if a female, after her grand-mother on the paternal side. Now follows a general drink of rice-beer and a tribal dinner. The midwife, who generally receives a fee of eight annas if the child is a female one, and ten annas and a *baru* (brass-plate) if a male, will now, on her part, invoke *Marañ Buru* and the dead ancestors of the father of the child at the village bathing-ghat, throw the leaf-cup in water, bathe and return home.[1]

Between the third and the fourth year, children of both sexes have their ears bored by their grand-mothers or elderly female relatives by means of a brass-needle. It is a quiet domestic ceremony and no invitations are issued outside.

Caco-Chatiar

The second critical period in the life of the Santal is sought to be guarded by a purificatory ritual called Caco-chatiar. This ceremony may be observed any time before marriage and is in effect, the admission

1 The midwife's fee for the next male child is 8 ans. and 6 ans. for a female.

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881 of the male-child to all the privileges of the
783 community life of the tribe. It is relevant to add
[582] that marriage is not permitted to any one who has
[764] not gone through the ceremony and should one die (without going through the ritual) his dead-body cannot be cremated nor are his bones thrown into the river, the most important step in a Santal funeral. It is, however, frequently seen that the father of several children performs the *Caco-chatiar* ceremony of all of them together.

As an initial step, *Iang hàṇḍia*, is prepared in the early morning. The villagers procure oil and
[622] turmeric. The Headman and *Paranik* drink rice-
[624] beer (*hàṇḍia*) and send for the villagers. The women
[793] then rub oil and turmeric on the bodies of the *Nacke* (village-priest) and their assistants and this is done to all in a customary order of precedence from the village-officials down to the villagers. Rice-beer is served. The Santals dance and sing.

[538] Then comes the turn of an old man of the village, a *Guru*, the repository of Santal lores to recite the tribal story of the creation of the world and the wanderings of the Santal (already narrated in the 1st. Chapter, Santal Genesis and Migration) ancestors till they came to their present habitat.

It is then emphasised that all the impurities of the male-child have been purged away and by participating in the drinking bout of *hàṇḍia*, they

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have initiated him into the full rights and responsibilities of adult manhood. The ceremony concludes with the appeal to the Monren hor, "We were black like crows, now we are white as white paddy-birds, you five men are our witnesses" (Campbell).

Cicatrization (Sika)

The Santals have some marks looking like vaccination scars on their left-forearms, midway between the wrist and the elbow. These signs seen on the outer side of the forearm, contain an odd number of marks as one, three, five, or nine. It is customary for the male children to wear these *Sika* marks, and the ceremony is generally performed within their twelfth year.

For cicatrization, they use a rag rolled to a thickness of about an inch and a half and shaped like a candle. An odd number of spots on the forearm are then spat upon, and the improvised candle is then made to stand on the saliva, which slowly burns and scalds the skin. The hands of the boy, who rolls in agony, are caught hold of by two men till the process is finished. Thereafter, the wound is healed by the application of a moss called *Sealom* (a fresh water Alga, *Mongeotea immersa*, West).

If you question a Santal as to why they have an odd number of these marks, he will readily answer

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One scrutinising the attendant marriage ceremonials must be struck by the fact that many of them aim at the union of the souls of the married couple along with their physical bodies. The tying of the ends of the cloths worn by the husband and the wife and their eating together, are instances on the point. Something more than this is sought after to ensure the steadfast obedience of the wife to the husband when the former eats a meal soaked in the water with which her husband's feet have been washed.

The same anxiety for the future welfare of the married couple is revealed in processes to guard the luck, and to exclude the evil omens, as by the beneficent and luck-conferring virtues of the mango-twigs in a water-pot. And we must not forget that omen-reading is the first essential of all Santal marriages. In this respect, they go so far as to marry the parties to dogs or trees to do away with the supposed evil effects of their teeth having appeared earlier in the upper gum. Nor must we overlook the fact that the married couple not only belong to each other but to the wider life of the clan and the tribe. This communion of the bride with her husband's people is ensured by the girl offering rice-beer and tooth-sticks to the bridegroom's party. And by ceremonial baths and anointing the body with turmeric paste, the Santals

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585 182 783 want to purify the couple from the evil effects of chance pre-marital sex-connections (a rare phenomenon with educated Santals), thereby neutralising the dangers to the family and the tribe.

585 177 182 Many of these ceremonials are closely analogous to Hindu practices; and have probably been borrowed and are thus due to culture contact, although it is not improbable that the Hindus themselves might have at an early period assimilated some similar Pre-Dravidian practices. Whatever that may be, one must

585 182 771 notice that Santal marriages are closely associated with religion as is indicated by offering of vermilion to *Maran Buru* and a goat to the dead ancestors. Thus we find that marriage no longer remains a civil contract of getting a partner in life on payment of a price, but takes the form of a sacrament as well.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES

764 The Santals have their own funeral customs. When a death takes place in the tribe, the village Headman and the elders flock together at the house in mourning, when they rub the dead body with oil and turmeric. Now, the corpse is taken out of the house in a *khatia* (a stringed bed-stead), placed in the yard and cleansed with cow-dung and water. A handful of paddy is spread over the spot and some thrust into the right palm of the deceased and thrown down some time later. The bier is next

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conveyed by four men, followed by a *Dàbi Daka* (a man who will place the dead body on the funeral pyre), carrying a winnowing fan containing fire in a bundle of straw, some seeds of cotton, straw picked from the thatch of the deceased, some fried paddy (*khòi*), powdered sun-dried rice mixed with turmeric, cow-dung and a small chicken in one hand ; while with the other, he holds a pot with lid, which will serve as the receptacle of the bones of the dead. In the rear, follow the villagers carrying *tañgis* (axes), *kudis* (an implement for digging earth) and thus they reach the crossroad at the outskirts of the village. Now, amidst lamentations the women-folk bathe the hands and feet of the deceased. The *Dàbi Daka* circles round the funeral assembly thrice and places some cotton-seeds beneath the four legs of the *khatia* (stringed bed-stead), when the bier is again lifted and the procession slowly moves towards the cremation ground. Here, the roads part for the women of the tribe, for, they have no right to proceed further. Hence they (women) wend their way to the bathing-ghat (*jòl-ghat*), have a purificatory ablution and thereafter go to the *kulbi* (village-lane) and crunch *dhup* (an incense). It is, however, remarkable that the members of the family in mourning need not do so; it is obligatory for the rest only.

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Those at the cremation ground now procure fuel and make the pyre. The dead body is taken round

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764 787 illustrate the point well. Thus the man who sets fire to the deceased, asks *Marañ Buru* in trance. The village elders, "*Mònrèn bòr*," also join in the question. "Are you well ?" *Marañ Buru* answers, "I am all right." Then they again ask the dead man, "You were not much aged. Why did you die so early ? Did any *dan* (witch) eat you up ? Did you die through natural causes ?" The dead man answers (through *Marañ Buru*), "This was the span of my life, so I died." Next they ask again, "Have you hoarded wealth anywhere under the earth ?" The dead man answers (through *Marañ Buru*), "Yes" (or no). If the answer be in the affirmative, directions are given by the man in trance as to where the money lies buried. The men assembled, thereupon, will dig up the earth to find the hoarded wealth. Lastly, it may be that the dead man (through *Marañ Buru*) may ask those present to bring his children. They are then brought and kissed by him. He may also request those present to look after the children well.

765 783 *Telnaban or chotokaman (Preliminary purification)*

The Santal observes ceremonial pollution for a period till he is in a position to procure the requisites of purification. This affects the particular clan (614) to which the deceased belonged. Thus we gathered at Mayurbhanj that when a Nij Hansdak' dies, all

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persons belonging to the same totem are affected, and they desist from eating fish, meat and oil, nor do they borrow fire from another man's house for nine days, till the *asidha* (ceremonial pollution) continues.

On the expiry of the period, the Headman arrives at the house in mourning with the village elders and the other invited relatives. A Santal barber then shaves the members of the family, whereupon, they bathe after rubbing their bodies with oil and oil-cake. Now, a ceremony follows when three tooth-sticks, four fingers in length, oil, oil-cake, *narkan hasa* (a kind of earth to wash the hair) are arranged on three *Sal*-leaves and offered to *Maraṅ Buru* (the chief presiding deity), the deceased and the dead ancestors, with prayers so that *Maraṅ Buru* may admit the released spirit after purifying it with all these materials.

Now, all men have a ceremonial bath closely followed by the women. A *Tika Murmu* now addresses the gathering, "They were so long under *asbida*. Now they are purified. We can now take them back." Now all shout *hòribol* as a sign of approval. Two men now again fall into a trance (*jhupar*) and impersonate *Maraṅ Buru* and the dead man. They are liberally plied with a supply of rice-beer, along with the "Mòṇṛèn hòṛ" (village elders). At night, fowls are offered by the tribe

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765 (*Simkutam*) and the inmates of the house worship
783 them (*Marañ Buru* and the deceased) with a hotch-
[782] potch, called *Giritora*. The ceremonies now conclude with a tribal feast and drink.

769 Thereafter, some rice and vegetables are kept on leaf-plates and later, deposited in a basket along with a water-pot, as a meal spread for the spirit of the deceased. Next, it is hung from a rafter of the deceased's house. The following morning, the basket is closely inspected ; and, if any food-particles can be seen, it is believed that the deceased has eaten the food and has washed his hands with the water in the pot.

765 *Iling Dahar (going to the river Damodar with the bones)*

Now the day arrives for carrying the bones of the dead to be consigned to the holy waters of Damodar. The elders with the Headman begin to pour in the deceased person's house. Some prepare
[787] sacks for carrying food-stuff and the bone, while two others fall in a trance (*jhupar*) impersonating again the dead man and *Marañ Buru*, when their wishes are consulted as to the person who will carry the bones. On the reply of the person impersonating the deceased, the man is shown his luggage.
[782] Now three fowls are sacrificed in honour of *Marañ*
[769] *Buru*, the ancestor-spirits and the dead man, the

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heart being reserved for the Chief Presiding Deity (*Marañ Buru*) and the remnants of the sun-dried rice that accompanied the offerings, are carefully preserved to be carried along to Damodar. 765 [782] [769]

Next, the bones previously buried are carried to the cross-road, washed with water and *hàṇḍia ràsi* (the best part of rice-beer), being rubbed within the folds of a yellow-coloured cloth. The women offer presents of money to the bone, and it is placed inside the sack prepared for the purpose. The empty pot (which contained the bone so long), is now placed on three twigs of *Kendu* tree (called so in Oriya) while the carrier walks round it thrice and then facing east breaks it amidst cries of *Hòribol* by the village-elders. Thereafter, he leaves for his destination being escorted by two men to the *Gadi* (halting place for men going towards Damodar). [769]

Bhandan or Final Purification

After the *jañ baba* (the bones of the dead) are deposited in the Damodar river, offerings like the *Pindòs* of the Hindus are prepared with mud, tooth-picks, parched rice and sweet-meats on three *sal*-leaves on an altar, when *Marañ Buru*, the dead ancestors and the deceased are propitiated. 765 769

Now, on the day for *Bhandan*, the relatives and the friends of the family in mourning arrive at the house of the deceased together with the village- 765 783

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783 765 elders. The men-folk are shaved and, thereafter, both men and women repair to the *jòl-ghat* (public bath). Coming back, two men again impersonate [782] [769] *Maraṅ Buru* and the deceased, and are offered *bàṇḍia ràsi* (the best part of rice-beer); fowls and goats are sacrificed in their honour in the yard. A meal is prepared with rice and offered inside the house, while the villagers are plied with rice-beer and treated to a feast. The meat of the sacrificed animal is divided in a peculiar way, the villagers being entitled to the upper side when it was felled on the ground, the lower falling to the share of him who provided it.

The ceremonies conclude at Mayurbhanj with *Kandh Bhojani*, when some Santals, impersonating Brahmins and Vaishnavs, are fed by the family, and *Bhandar Bodh*, which requires a barber, similarly acting his part, to be presented with rice and meat showing undoubted influences of Hinduism.

IDEAS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

795 772 At this stage, we think it will be instructive to give the reader some idea about the Santal's belief in a life hereafter.

The Heaven (*Serma disom*, lit. sky-country) is situated up in the blue skies. It is also called [776] *Svòròg*. There the gods, *Maraṅ Buru* (the Chief Presiding Deity) and others live. At times they also

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most mysterious of all episodes in human life. He associates a death in the tribe as an event which necessitates segregation of the family and the clan visited by the calamity, and not until they undergo ceremonial purification, are they thought entitled to the fuller life of the tribe, and this re-union is effected by a final community meal.

In all these socio-religious rites, the whole Santal society of the locality acts like one man. Here is a supernatural danger visiting a family. Unless the full co-operation of the tribe is received, it may be an occasion for the unconscious contamination to injure the tribe itself by its mysterious infection. So the man affected by a death in the family looks up to the tribe for help and sympathy, and the tribe in its turn helps its members during the crisis, by propitiating the super-human powers beyond our ken, who alone know the key to the mysterious phenomena round about humanity.

It is very easy to notice here also, the undoubted influence of Hinduism in the funeral customs of the Santals. But, whereas the Hindus have universalised the individual with the eternal essence, and have woven a theory of universal humanity by offering *Pindas* even to the unknown dead, their formula being "*Jagaddhitaya Krishnaya*," (to Sri Krishna, the Lord of the Universe, for the good of the Universe), the Santal, although not dreaming

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796 Meanwhile, the whole village is agog with music and folk-songs of the women who have returned already. The men now return to the village by evening, with the priest at the head, dancing and singing as they go.

Sohrae, the Winter Harvest Home

The Santals of the Santal Parganas have a picturesque festival to celebrate the *Sohrae*, their Winter Harvest Home, the biggest annual event of their tribal life. This is a common day of thanksgiving to the gods as rain, the sun and fair weather have contributed to a bumper crop. Known as *Bandhna*, in common parlance, this picturesque festival has no specified date in the tribal calendar. It is begun at suitable dates for each village. Sometimes dates are also fixed by the Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas and the Excise Department to regulate them. But there is this reservation that the festival must conclude before the last day of the Bengali month, *Pous* (mid-January).

[783] The festival starts with an initial purification ceremony (*Um*), when the members of the tribe cleanse themselves with a ceremonial ablution. Houses and court-yards also are scrupulously made free from dirt.

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796 will their women wear them in their hair. As distinguished from the *Sobrae*, the Harvest Home, which is a trifle Bacchanalian, this festival is purer in its observances.

796 783 778 The festival begins with a day of purification called *Um*, when the young men of the village assemble at the *Jahèrthan*, (the Holy-Grove) in the village, and build two huts. One of these huts is [776] reserved for the Santal deity, called Gosane era, the other is meant to be jointly shared by Jahèr era, the presiding deity of the grove, "Monṛènko", (the "Five", meaning the five presiding gods) and Maraṅ Buru, the chief presiding deity. The shrines thus built are then purified with cow-dung by the priest. All the young men of the village then bathe and purify themselves.

796 [793] [783] In the meantime, the *Naeke* (priest) cleanses a winnowing fan, a basket, a bow and arrow, a pick-axe, a broom-stick, a holy gong and a hunting-horn and daub them with oil and *mithi* (a kind of spice).

[624] The evening comes. In the meantime, the *Goḍet*, the orderly of the village Headman, has presented him (the priest) with three fowls. Three [787] young men now advance towards the priest's house, shaking their heads in a trance and impersonating Jahèr era, Maraṅ Buru and Gosane era respectively. Jahèr era then enters the priest's hut, puts on the bracelet, and putting the basket on his head, takes

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On the first day called *Um Narka* (purification), the members of the clan clean their houses, wash clothes and eat nothing except rice and *biri* (a pulse). Thereafter, some other goats are also castrated and the place of sacrifice is made clean and a pot of holy water placed there. 796 614 783

On this day the clan offers *pujas* to two gods whose names our informant did not disclose as a clan secret, but added that *Brahma* and *Ganesh* of the Hindus are the nearest equivalent to the deities, who are impersonated by two Santals after falling in a trance. They are solemnly asked their names and on their answer, they are shown a goat and a ram to be offered to them the next day, for their approval. As they express their satisfaction, they are prayed to resume their normal selves. 796 614 787

Before sun-rise on the second day called *Sàrdi*, the clan assembles at the place of sacrifice and offers the goat to the Santal equivalent of *Ganesh* and the ram to *Brahma*. Two ancestors are also invoked with offerings of fowl, the spotted ones being meant for the ancestors on the mother's side, while the red ones for those on the father's side. *Maraṅ Buru* (the chief presiding deity) gets a white fowl. The peculiarity of the sacrifice is that the ram, goat and the white fowl are sacrificed by being killed by one stroke as is done by the Hindus, whereas, the spotted and red fowls are slowly cut. Prayers are 796 614 782 [769]

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Hill-Spirit hast thou come here?, To what order (of spirits) dost thou belong?. Answer questions. Then, O deity! we shall spread a wooden-seat (or stone-seat) for thee."

The men in trance reply:—"Hinsaha (very well I am answering)."

Next follows an answer giving the name of the *Oṛak' Boṅga*. The householder then prays, "So and so is ill ; he is being treated by so and so. Do please help the doctor to cure the disease. If the patient recovers, I shall offer you this (fowls, rams or goats)".

The men in trance now give appropriate answers, as to what god to propitiate, with what offerings and when, or may suggest other ways and means to ged rid of the calamity.

This prayer is offered at the door of the room (Bhitar duar), which is considered holy as the abode of the household deity. This room is not open to strangers, and even members of the house can enter this only after a ceremonial purification. If the disease is serious, villagers are called, and *Jhupar* takes place to find out the appropriate remedy.

Belief in Evil Eye

Like the other aboriginal tribes of the Central Belt, the Santals believe in women possessing a malevolent eye, that can bring ruin on people by

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535 796 789 world. Various magical and imitative suggestions can be noticed in "Riñja" dances. Thus agricultural implements are represented by movements suggesting a smith hammering. Other movements show the dancers cutting jungles, giving a boundary to agricultural plots, milking cows, and even cock-crows are imitated to show that the house-holder should now rise from his bed and go to his field.

796 789 535 [731] It was also stated that the Santals believe that if "Riñja" is not danced during Karam Puja, there will be no rain. In the dance movements, one can see that the dancers swing their right hand up and down, thus magically invoking rain. On other occasions, should a drought be apprehended, "Riñja" may be danced in the village *akhra* (the village dancing-yard) after purifying it with cow-dung and sprinkling *mithi* (a spice). This is undoubtedly a magical process to bring down rain on the earth.

[783]

Ḍaṇṭa ènèc'

796 585 The next, "Ḍaṇṭa," is danced during the Harvest Festival (Sòhrae) and is a special preserve of the youths of the tribe. They form two circles with the musicians in the central position. A peculiarity of the dance is that in the beginning they step twice to the right and then twice to the

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Jom Jati: By performing this ceremony an outcasted Santal is accepted back into society. It is done in the following way :—

When both the aggrieved parties are ready to provide the necessary money for the performance of this ceremony they inform the Manjhiharain who again informs the Parganait of the Bunglow, and the latter makes it known to the Parganaits of other neighbouring bunglows. Then a day is fixed for the performance of this ceremony and the person who is to be re-admitted prepares a big feast. Then the outcasted man and woman go out to the end of the village street with a twisted cloth round their necks, and water in a lota. To the Parganaits and the village chiefs the offenders acknowledge their offence and pray to them, "Have pity on us". The Parganaits and the chiefs say "Since you have acknowledged your offence we do now take and carry all that for you". Then the outcasts take a little water and wash their mouths with it and pass the lota round to all the leading men, who do the same. After this they enter the village and the courtyard of the outcasts who personally wash the feet of the leaders of the people. All then sit down in rows to eat, leaf plates being put before them. On the leaf-plates of the parganaits Rs. 10 is put, on the Desmanjhis' plates Rs. 5 and on those of the headmen also Rs. 5.

963 795 346 775 **Disposal of the Dead**: When a person is dying they generally keep the doors open, as the Santals prefer to have the spirit of the departed wandering about outside the house than taking a permanent abode inside. This is probably one of the reasons why the Manjhisthan is built, as it affords a residence to the manes of the

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CHAPTER 9

FESTIVALS

The two great village festivals take place in the spring and after the harvest. The name of the former, *Baha*, means "Flower festival". It is held after the full moon in the month of *Phalgun* (February-March). The hot season is about to begin, sap is rising in the trees, and the *sarjom* is resplendent with blossom and tender green leaves. Until the festival has taken place the women do not gather the *matkom* blossoms which provide them with both food and drink. It is held on different days in different villages so that the celebrations can be accompanied by a round of visits to relatives. The opening day of all festivals is a day of purification, known as "bathing day". On this day at the time of the Spring festival two temporary sheds are put up in the sacred grove and the young men carry out a hunt in the woods near the village. The priest completes his preparations and bathes certain articles in the waters of the village tank. At sunset three hens are taken to his house by the villagers, who remain there to dance. Three of the young men become spirit-possessed. One impersonates the "Five", another the Old Lady of the Sacred Grove, and the third takes the part of *Maraṅ Buru*; they seize the implements which the priest has purified earlier in the day and make play with them. The priest receives them with respect; he washes their legs and, addressing the spirits, he asks for good fortune during the coming year. When this is over the young men are recalled to their senses by a series of sharp taps on their backs. Dancing is continued throughout the night in the village street just outside the priest's house.

In the early afternoon of the following day the priest is accompanied by the villagers in a singing procession to the sacred grove. On arrival there the same young men are again possessed and run away across the fields, being chased and brought back by the rest of the young men. The priest now assumes an attitude of great humility towards them. He receives them with a cloth tied round his neck in token of the submission of the village to the spirits. The hens are sacrificed and cooked in a hash with rice. The priest and his wife partake of one and the men of the village consume the rest of the food, after which everyone returns home except the priest. He has to remain in the grove until the young men return to escort him. He is then taken to every house in turn and received with great honour. His feet are

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His feet are washed in each house and he receives presents of grain and beer. The subsequent merrymaking dies down during the night. The celebration is completed on the following day, when the co-priest offers drops of his own blood to the boundary spirits.

The following account of the Spring festival held in Barikul in 1939 was recorded by Babulal at the time, and it conveys, as no outside account could, the atmosphere of the festival. He begins:

"*March 17*. Today is the bathing day for the Flower festival. Early in the morning the bailiff called everyone to make the booths ready in the sacred grove. The women were busy boiling their clothes. One young man from every house took part in the thatching of the booths; some brought *sarjom* branches from the jungle, and others made small wooden seats for the spirits. The priest washed all the things for the spirits' house—the bangles, the necklace, a bow and arrow, an axe, also basket, broom, bells and horns—and he brought back to his house an earthen pot of water for luck. The place of sacrifice was smeared with cowdung, and oil and vermilion were placed there in readiness. When the young men had finished the thatching they bathed, and then said to the bailiff: 'We go now to Sonadungri for the flower hunt; see that the drums beat and the horns sound at the foot of the banyan tree, for when we hear them we shall start. Do not delay, for we want to begin.' The bailiff completed his bath quickly, and taking four youths with the drums and the horns to the banyan tree by the stone fence he did as he had been requested. And so the youths went out hunting. They caught fourteen hares, thirteen jungle fowl, four partridges and ten squirrels. These they brought home hanging from a pole which was slung from the shoulders of two men. When they arrived back at the side of the large tank, the spoils were divided, and some we gave to the men of neighbouring villages who had joined in the hunt. The flesh was roasted and divided; some was given to the killers, some to the dogs, some to the villagers, and a special portion to the widows.

In the evening the bailiff called everyone to gather for the 'spirit possession'. We took three new winnowing fans and all collected at the priest's house. Three men were possessed, and each of them took hold of a winnowing fan. They were seated facing the east, and the priest put sun-dried rice on to the winnowing fan of *Marak Buru*. Immediately to his left sat *Manjhi*

[i.e. the priest.—Ed/pt] 104

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of the opposite sex. On the first night the young people go through the village conducting the ceremony known as "waking the cattle". There is much drumming and dancing outside each of the cowsheds, and the cattle are feasted and decorated; small white circles made of flour are painted on their hides, vermilion is placed on their horns and heads. When all the cattle in the village have been "wakened", the young men go round once more for the "blessing" of the cattle. They are garlanded and fed with sweetmeats, and the blessing is pronounced as a hope that they will be protected from the dangers of disease and witchcraft, from thieves and the depredations of wild animals during the coming year. This "blessing" is pronounced by the women.

Other ceremonies are performed on the following days. The whole celebration may last either for three or for five days. At one time during the festival the young men of the village lock the bailiff in his home, and he is not allowed to come out until he has promised to treat them all to a drink of beer. During the second day of the festival the sub-clans perform the sacrifices to their *abge* spirits. These sacrifices are also preceded by ceremonial bathing on the part of the members of the households concerned, and the men take to the waterside their hunting implements, bows and arrows, axes and spears. The head of the house officiates, and the sacrificial animals are set apart in the same way as for the village sacrifices, having vermilion in oil placed on their heads, their shoulders and their hoofs. The flesh of the animals is, however, cooked separately from the rice with which it is eaten. On the second day also the cattle are baited. A bull is tied to a post, and the group of men who gather round it begin to infuriate the beast by persistent drumming. One or two of the men at a time, holding before them the skin of a dead animal, engage in mock combat with the bull, leaping at it and inciting it to plunge at them with its horns. The pastime continues for several hours and sometimes results in accidents. It is a happy season for the herdboys; they receive presents of cloth and are well fed by their masters. On the last night of the festival the unmarried men and girls sleep at the house of the *jogmanjhi* in token of the fact that their period of licence is at an end.

The remaining festivals of the Santal year do not make the same stir throughout the countryside. *Mokor* is the name used in the area by Santals and non-Santals alike for the festival which takes place in mid-January. In some places it is called

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844 evil eye. Most of the subsequent proceedings centre round the child.

• 783 192 The word *chaṭiar* is used both in connection with birth ceremonial and the later initiation. It is connected with the Hindi *chut*, which means "pollution", but the ceremonial stands not only for the removal of uncleanness but also for the reception, of the new member into society. The ceremonial uncleanness resulting from birth is shared by the whole village, and no religious festival may be held until it has been removed. The house in which the birth has occurred is the centre of the pollution, and none of the other villagers will eat or drink there while it is in operation. If anyone is wearing a charm against illness he removes it before entering the courtyard of the house, lest the charm lose its power. Although all the ceremonies must be completed within a month after the birth of the child, the actual dates may be modified by a variety of considerations. If a festival is due the ceremonies will be advanced rather than delay or abandon the festival. During the cultivation season they may be either advanced or delayed in order to suit the convenience of work in the fields. The normal day for the *chaṭiar* is on the fifth day after the birth of a boy and on the third day after the birth of a girl. The essential elements in the removal of pollution are shaving and bathing. The villagers all gather together in the courtyard, and first of all the barber—one of the villagers, a Santal—shaves the village officials, then all the men present and lastly the father of the child. The newborn child is then carried by the midwife to the barber, who cuts five locks from the child's head: two from the front, one from each side and one from the middle of the back of the head. These locks are placed in a leaf cup pending their disposal. When the shaving has been completed the men go to the nearest bathing place and bathe themselves. On their return to the house the midwife takes all the women down to bathe, and she carries the arrow that was used for cutting the umbilical cord. Two pieces of string are attached to the arrow; one of these is used to tie up in a bundle the child's hair, and at the bathing place the hairs are detached and floated away on the water. The second string is soaked in oil and turmeric and tied round the child's waist; there it remains until it is worn out, when it is always replaced by another. When the women return from the bathing place the mother sips some cowdung and water that has been prepared by the midwife and rubs some of the mixture on her head. Then three leaf cups are filled with a paste made from sun-dried rice and water. The con-

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tents of one are sprinkled near the four legs of the string bed in the house, of the second on the breasts of the men, and of the third on the breasts of the women. Then a brew of *nim*[1] leaves and water is brought out. This is very bitter, and the men to whom it is first presented generally make excuses to escape from having to sip it. All the women take some, out of sympathy, as they express it, with the mother, who drinks a cupful. She often continues to drink small quantities for several days, as it is supposed to aid the flow of milk. At this gathering beer is provided for everyone, and if the family can afford to do so they prepare a meal as well.

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An essential part of the ceremonies is the naming of the child, whereby it acquires a definite status in the village and among the kinsfolk. In the area round Sarenga the naming is sometimes accomplished on a day different from that on which the shaving and bathing take place, and it is the naming ceremony that emphasizes the social obligations of the household. The villagers may bathe on the fifth day and gather at the house for the naming on the seventh day. The midwife receives her payment at the gathering, and she is paid in cloth and rice, receiving also a bangle for cutting the cord. She receives twice as much rice for a boy as for a girl. The name is chosen by the parents of the child and it is announced to the villagers by the midwife. Holding the child in her arms, she says to them if the child is a boy: "From today call him so-and-so when he goes hunting." If the child is a girl she says: "From today call her so-and-so when you call her to draw water." The first-born boy is named after his father's father and the second boy is named after his mother's father. The first girl receives the name of her father's mother and the second girl that of her mother's mother. When these names have been used, children are given the names of uncles and aunts, with a preference on the whole for the father's family. Before the naming the guests ask: "Of what country is this child?" When the name chosen comes from the father's family, the question is answered by giving the name of the father's village, the mother's village being given when the chosen name comes from her relations. If a child cries excessively it may be put down to the fact that it is unhappy over its name. Babulal of Barikul wrote: "Sometimes among us the children sleep happily right from birth and at other times they

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[1] *Melia azadirachta*, L. For its connection with godlings of disease see W. Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, especially pp. 119 ff., and index.

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pieces to make for convenience in eating with the fingers, and it is a point of etiquette to serve each guest with a variety of delicacies from different parts of the bird or animal being eaten, but the flesh from the head is reserved for the chief mourner and his kinsfolk.

With this ceremony one part of the final rites has been completed. The villagers who assisted at the cremation have been safeguarded against the dangers that are inherent in handling the corpse of a dead person and the village is again clean. The mourners have received much comfort from the display of village solidarity and from the sympathy of their kinsfolk and they are free once more to resume their daily work. They have also re-established contact of a kind with the spirit of the departed and so satisfied one of the most persistent longings of the human heart. He has spoken with them and explained from his present knowledge the reason for his death. The presence of the bones within the house or at least at the base of a tree just beyond the village acts as a continual reminder of his nearness to them. So far as the funeral rites are designed to compensate the living for their loss, all that can be done has now been done, but something still remains to be done before the departed spirit will be at rest. The bones have to be taken away to the river, where they will be floated away on the tide. The river in question is the Damodar,[1] which is known to them by the name *Nāī*, or River (all other rivers are called *gaḍa*); it lies from eighty to one hundred miles away from the farther villages—a considerable journey. The time for undertaking this expedition is dictated by the claims of work and other social obligations, and it usually happens that a party from a group of neighbouring villages set out together in the short period of comparative leisure which follows the transplanting of rice during the rains. An animal is set aside at home to be used at the final feast that will take place on the return of the travellers. Before they leave home an ear of the animal is pierced and the blood which falls is mixed with some sun-dried rice that is placed in the earthen pot with the bones. The ceremony at the river is carried out at one of several traditional cremation grounds that abound on its banks. These are Hindu sites, and the attendants, who are usually of the *Hāḍi* and *Dom* castes, receive a fee from the Santals—a cloth and some money. The ceremonial reminds one of the procedure followed at the "water marriage" celebrations by the village tank. The site has to be bought, and upon it cowrie shells are placed in a circle

[1] See Chapter 3, p. 28.

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this occasion they make use of *sarpa*, and the Christmas songs that they sing are set to *Sohrae* tunes, as Christmas falls into the harvest season. During the afternoon of Christmas Day sports are held. These attract large numbers of spectators, and the final item in the sports, an archery contest, has become established as one of the events of the countryside. The interest and enthusiasm of spectators and competitors, who gather year after year to display their skill, is out of all proportion to the value of the prize that is offered. When the sports end the people disperse, the Christians to feast in their own homes.

Good Friday is observed with great solemnity, and the majority of the adults fast until after they have attended church. The services are very well attended, and on the initiative of the people themselves new forms of celebration are frequently being introduced. In most of the local churches the three-hour service has established itself in the customs of the people. On Good Friday in 1946 at the village of Barikul the people decided to follow the service by a silent procession through the village street. They filed behind a "standard bearer" who carried a rude cross fashioned from two *sarjom* saplings. At Easter it is customary for the dawn to be greeted by bands of young men singing in the village and also at the local Christian burial ground. The day is also characterized by large and enthusiastic gatherings of worshippers. Little has been done in this area to "baptize" the magico-religious practices connected with agriculture, and although Harvest Festivals are celebrated by the bringing of thank-offerings to church and the decoration of the church buildings, they have not become times of community rejoicing and remembrance as have the historic occasions associated with the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of the Saviour.

In the customs that surround life's crises one sees the blending of old and new concepts and symbols. Pregnancy taboos are widely observed, and steps have to be taken by Christians to remove the uncleanness resulting from birth. The practice of "churching" women was not introduced to the people at the beginning and it has never been put in the forefront, but the Christians carry out the bathing and naming and the feasting of neighbours. In this they are joined in many cases by non-Christian villagers, though no two Christian occasions are alike in this respect. In some places most of the villagers gather, in other places all the women come, while at other villages only Christians collect. Something depends on the strength and persistence